



CASCADE LAND CONSERVANCY

CONSERVING GREAT LANDS
CREATING GREAT COMMUNITIES

May 19, 2011

Mr. Paul Reitenbach
Senior Policy Analyst, King County DDES
900 Oakesdale Avenue SW
Renton, WA 98057-5212

Re: Draft King County Countywide Planning Policies

Mr. Reitenbach:

On behalf of Cascade Land Conservancy (CLC), thank you for the opportunity to participate in the recent stakeholder outreach meetings for the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) update. We commend the King County Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) for undertaking this effort, as well as the GMPC staff for its diligent work throughout this ongoing process.

We also appreciate the opportunity to review the current draft CPPs, and we hope the following comments will be considered as you prepare a final draft for presentation to the GMPC.

CLC envisions and strives for a region with spectacular landscapes, a vibrant economy, and great places to live and work. This mission is captured in the *Cascade Agenda*, the 100-year regional vision and action plan that drives our work—which King County played an important role in developing. The *Cascade Agenda* sets two goals for our region: conserving 1.3 million acres of farms, forests and natural areas, as well as making our communities vibrant and livable. We believe the CPPs should reflect this spirit, helping ensure a high quality of life for King County residents into the future.

With this in mind, we were pleased with much of the draft CPP document. Notably, we commend staff for the content of the Environment, Economy, Transportation, and Public Facilities chapters of the current draft.

We were particularly interested to read the Development Patterns chapter. With specific regard to its content:

- We support the inclusion of policies that establish greenhouse gas reduction targets and that highlight a need for directing growth to urban centers and high-density locations. Such areas better allow for transportation options like transit, walking and cycling.

- We are encouraged by Policy DP-6, which acknowledges the important connection between public health and the built environment. This encompasses the importance of food systems, physical activity, and social connectivity.
- Policy DP-29 is an important acknowledgment that creating vibrant communities involves more than simply concentrating growth into urban centers; it requires ensuring such centers are affordable, attractive places that incorporate landmark preservation, green buildings, street trees, public spaces, and safe, convenient transportation options.
- As a general statement, we strongly support Policies DP-60 and DP-61 concerning the use of a range of traditional and market-based land use tools to manage growth. We particularly agree with the focus on using such tools to focus growth in cities, and with the call to secure opportunities for financing infrastructure within cities accepting transferable development rights. We believe this connection is integral to successful, large-scale implementation of TDR.
- We oppose one element of Policy DP-61, however. Specifically, we do not support DP-61, Bullet 7 pertaining to the transfer of development rights within the rural zone. We feel this language represents a significant, unnecessary, and potentially short-sighted departure from the existing CPP concerning rural transfers, LU-14. EPA research has shown the negative impact large-lot rural development patterns have on watershed health. New tools such as the emerging watershed characterizations may lead to alternative rural land use approaches yielding better solutions for both communities and the Puget Sound—but we are not there yet. Accordingly, CLC believes that flexibility should be retained in the CPPs for innovative rural land use options. LU-14 provides this flexibility. We thus urge you to retain LU-14's language and abandon that of the proposed DP-61, Bullet 7.

Finally, with regard to the Housing chapter, Policy H-4, we would like to see language acknowledging the importance of “cost of housing plus transportation” in any affordable housing strategy. We feel this is an important reflection of the true cost of housing.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Countywide Planning Policies. If you have any questions concerning these comments, please feel free to contact me at 206.905.6935 or skips@cascadeland.org

Sincerely,



Skip Swenson,
Managing Director, Policy Department
Cascade Land Conservancy